

HUSBAND RESCUED DESPAIRING WIFE

After Four Years of Discouraging
Conditions, Mrs. Bullock Gave
Up in Despair. Husband
Came to Rescue.

Catron, Ky.—In an interesting letter from this place, Mrs. Bettie Bullock writes as follows: "I suffered for four years, with womanly troubles, and during this time, I could only sit up for a little while, and could not walk anywhere at all. At times, I would have severe pains in my left side.

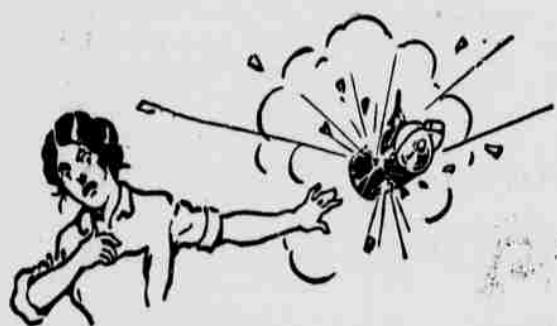
The doctor was called in, and his treatment relieved me for a while, but I was soon confined to my bed again. After that, nothing seemed to do me any good.

I had gotten so weak I could not stand, and I gave up in despair.

At last, my husband got me a bottle of Cardui, the woman's tonic, and I commenced taking it. From the very first dose, I could tell it was helping me. I can now walk two miles without its tiring me, and am doing all my work."

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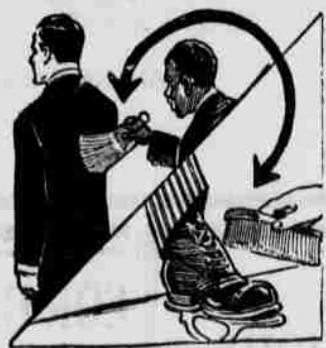
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ded to me once that his idea of a husband was not only one respect—namely, the power to relax. Jarvis had never taken time for relaxation, and he was beginning to wear out; and so he deliberately set about learning to play. The emperor of France, so history tells us, took his greatest pleasure in the company of women; therefore Hammond sought women. He doesn't know the taste of defeat, so the result was foreordained.

CHAPTER VII.

By the time Lorelei had completed her recital of those occurrences that had excited her suspicions the car was rolling out the doors leading toward the Long Island plains, and with headlights ablaze, was defying all speed laws. Merkle had drawn the conversation shield rearward, and in its shelter leaned back with eyes closed. He seemed asleep, but after a time he spoke abruptly:

"Melcher is a shrewd man. He wouldn't tackle a blackmailing job of this size without protection; otherwise I could put him out of the way very quickly. I dare say Miss Lynn herself doesn't know who is behind him."

"Why don't you warn Mr. Hammond at once?"

Merkle rolled his head loosely. "You don't know the man. He would laugh at the idea of a plot against him."

Merkle dozed again, half buried in the cushions. They had passed Jamaica, but it was not until it had swept into the Motor Parkway that the chauffeur let the machine out. Over the deserted plains it tore, cometlike, a meteor preceded by a streamer of light. The causeway leaped into view and vanished beneath the wheels, like a treacherous ribbon whirling upon spools. Merkle lay back inertly, listening and swaying to the side-thrust of the cushions, but Lorelei found her fists clinched and her muscles hard with the nervous strain. Finally she pushed the front seat, stared at the tiny dashboard. The finger of the speedometer oscillated gently over the figure "90," and she dropped back with a gasp. They had been running thus for a long time.

Merkle roused to say, "Is this too fast for you, Miss Knight?"

She laughed nervously. "No, I'm sorry I woke you."

Merkle inquired the time of his chauffeur, then directed him to turn homeward along the North shore.

"I shan't be selfish and keep you out any longer, Miss Knight," he said. "If you don't mind, I'll doze on the way in, and try to figure out the next move in this Hammond affair."

The return trip was another hurtling rush through the night, in a silence broken only by Merkle's demand for more speed whenever the machine slackened its labor. The miles wheeled past; the Sound lay to the right.

They were sweeping over a rolling North shore road when suddenly out of blackness ahead blazed two blinding headlights. With startling abruptness they appeared over the crest of a rise; Merkle's driver swung to the right.



"I'm Terribly Sorry, Miss Knight."

The strange car held to its course: there was a blast of horns, a dazzling instant of intense illumination, then a crash as the inside mud-guards met. Merkle's car seemed to leap into the air; there was a report of an exploding tire; the automobile was bucking and bumping, as if the pavement had been turned into a corduroy road; then it

whizzed onward, leaving in its wake a drunken shout of mockery and defiance.

"Narrow shave, that. I wonder we weren't all killed," Merkle eyed the car's crumpled mud-guard and running board, then directed his driver to ascertain the extent of the damage. The motor was still throbbing, but a brief examination disclosed a broken steering knuckle and a bent axle in addition to an injured wheel.

"I'm terribly sorry, Miss Knight; but I'll have to send for another car," apologized Merkle.

"Is this splendid machine ruined?" He shrugged. "That's the curse of these roads. Somebody is always driving recklessly. Lorelei smiled at memory of the miles they had covered so swiftly; but she saw that he was serious and in a sour temper. "One risks his life on the whim of some drunken idiot the moment he enters a motor car. Now for a telephone."

A terse question to his man served to fix their location.

"We're not far from the Chateau," Merkle interpreted the answer. "That place is always open, so if you don't mind the wait we'll go ahead. It will take an hour to get one of my other machines, but meanwhile we can have a bite to eat." At her cheerful acceptance his tone changed.

"You're all right. Some women would be hysterical after such a shake-up. I swear, I think I feel it more than you. If you were a man I'd like to have you for a chum."

The Chateau was a quiet roadside, unsurpassed by any city restaurant, and being within an hour's run by motor, it received a liberal patronage. Thus were large at the Chateau: its hospitality was famous among those who could afford the extravagance of midnight entertainment; and yet it was a quiet place. No echo of what occurred within its walls ever reached the outside world. Sea-food, waffles, and discretion were its recognized specialties, and people came for miles—mainly in pairs—to enjoy them.

As the pedestrians neared the avenue of maples leading up to the house they espied in the road ahead of them first the dull red glow of a tail light, then a dusty license plate.

"There's luck," Merkle ejaculated. "I'll rent this car."

In the gloom several figures were standing, facing in the direction of the Chateau, and when Merkle spoke they wheeled as if startled.

"No, you can't hire this machine. What do you think this is, a cab-stand?" answered a gruff voice.

"Jim!" cried Lorelei, and ran forward.

Her breathless amazement at the meeting was no greater than her brother's. "Sis! What the devil are you doing here? He managed to say. One of the men who had been kneeling over a case of some sort, dimly outlined in the radiance of a side light, rose and placed his burden in the tonneau.

"I'm ready," he announced.

Young Knight showed some nervousness and apprehension—emotions which his companions, judging by their alert watchfulness, fully shared. Jim seized his sister by the arm and led her aside.

"How the deuce did you get here—and who is this guy?" He jerked his head toward Merkle.

Lorelei introduced her companion and made known the cause of their present plight.

"Humph!" grunted Jim. "What do you suppose you'll say to this—you out all night with a man?"

"What are you doing? Who are those people?" she retorted.

"Never mind. But say—I don't like the looks of this affair."

For a second time Merkle appealed to Jim. "If you can't take your sister home I'll have to telephone for another car."

Jim's tone was disagreeable as he replied. "You two don't look as if you'd been wrecked. Where's your driver?" Merkle's fist clenched; he muttered something, at which Jim laughed harshly.

"Now don't get sore," said the latter; "I'm not going to make trouble, only I want to know where you've been."

A bareheaded man came running across the lawn and flung himself into the waiting automobile. One of Jim's companions called his name sharply.

"Will you take me home?" his sister implored.

"Can't do it. I'll see you later, and you, too, Merkle." His last words, delivered as he swung himself upon the running board of the car, sounded like a threat; a moment later, and the machine had disappeared into the night.

"H-m! Your brother has a suspicious mind," Merkle said. "I hope he won't make you any trouble."

"He can't make trouble for me," Lorelei's emphasis on the last word made her meaning clear: her companion shrugged.

"Then there's no harm done, I assure you."

They turned to upon the driveway walking silently; then as they neared the Chateau they became aware of an unusual commotion in progress there. Men were running from stable to garage, others were scouring the grounds; from the open door came a voice pitched high in anger. The speaker was evidently beside himself with wrath. He was shouting orders to scurrying attendants, and abusing the manager, who hovered near him in a frantic but futile effort at pacification.

The enraged person proved to be Jarvis Hammond. He was hatless, purple-faced, shaken with combative fury. At first the two newcomers thought he was dangerously drunk,

but, as they mounted to the terrace which served as an outdoor dining place they saw their mistake. Recognizing Merkle, Hammond's manner changed instantly.

"John!" he cried. "By God! you're just in time."

"What's happened?"

"Blackmail, or worse, I hardly know, myself. These ruffians put up something on me—they're all in it, even the manager."

The latter, a sleek Frenchman with ferocious mustaches and frightened eyes, wrung his hands in supplication.

"M'sieu 'Ammon," he bleated, "you ruin me. Such accusation is terrible. But wait, Calmness. The man will be caught."

"Caught!" roared the steel magnate. "You know who he is. Give him to me!" A uniformed doorman appeared with a smoking lantern in his hand, and Hammond wheeled upon him.

"Well? Did you find him?"

"We can't find nobody. There was a car outside the grounds, but it's gone now."

Merkle interposed. "Will you tell me what has happened?"

"It is terrible, incredible, M'sieu," wailed the manager.

"Same old story, John. I came out here for a quiet supper with—a lady."



"They Got Us Into a Private Room, Then Took a Flashlight."

I've been coming here regularly. They got us into a private room, then took a flashlight, and—there you are. I made a rush for the waiter as soon as I realized what had occurred, but he'd skipped. Everybody's skipped, photographer and all. Nobody knows anything. Blamest bunch of idiots I ever saw." He ground his teeth.

Lorelei, who had remained in the background, turned suddenly sick at memory of that mysterious party at the gate; she understood now the significance of the man with the box and of the fleeing figure that had come through the darkness.

The terrified manager continued his heartbroken lament, and Hammond seemed about to destroy him when Merkle drew the latter aside, speaking in an undertone.

Hammond listened briefly, then broke out:

"Nonsense. I'd stake my life on her. Why she's prostrated. It's either pure blackmail, or it's my wife's work. She's had detectives on me for some time." Merkle murmured something more. "Oh, come now! I know what I'm talking about, and I won't stand for that," cried Hammond.

Merkle shrugged; his next words were audible, and they were both sharp and incisive.

"The harm's done. They got away clean. Now we've got to kill the story and kill it quick in case they intend it for the papers."

"My God! Newspapers—at this time," groaned the other. "It couldn't be worse."

"Right. We must move fast. Is your car here?"

"Yes."

"Get it. We'll go in with you. I had an accident to mine."

"You'll see for yourself you're wrong—about the other." Hammond jerked his head meaningly toward the house, then strode away to order his motor.

Merkle favored his young companion with a wintry smile.

"It seems we're too late."

Lorelei nodded silently. "Don't tell him who spoke to us out there. Not yet, at least. I—can't see him go to jail."

"Jail? There won't be any jail to this—there never is. Jarvis will have to settle for the sake of the rest of us."

Hammond's limousine rolled in under the porte-cochere, and a moment later the owner appeared with Lila.

Lorelei stared at her friend in genuine surprise, for it was obvious that Lila was deeply agitated. Her face was swollen with weeping; she verged upon hysteria. No sooner were the four in the car and under way than she broke down, sobbing wretchedly.

"It's all my fault. I might have known he was up to something; but I didn't think he'd dare—" she managed to say.

"He? Who?" Merkle asked her.

"Max Melcher. He as much as told me. If I hadn't been a fool I'd have guessed, but he— Oh, I could kill myself." She burst into strangling sobs and hysterical laughter.

"Why did you let him come to the dressing room?" Lorelei inquired.

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